AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1.   Please cancel claim 1.

2.   Please cancel claim 2.

3.   Please cancel claim 3.

4.   Please cancel claim 4.

5.   Please cancel claim 5.

6. - 31.   (Previously Canceled)

32.   Please cancel claim 32.

33.   Please cancel claim 33.

34.   Please cancel claim 34.

35.   Please cancel claim 35.

36.   Please cancel claim 36.

37.   Please cancel claim 37.

38.   Please cancel claim 38.

39.   Please cancel claim 39.

40.   Please cancel claim 40.

41.   Please cancel claim 41.

42.   Please cancel claim 42.

43.   Please cancel claim 43.

44.   Please cancel claim 44.

45.   Please cancel claim 45.

46.   Please cancel claim 46.

47.   (New) A method of providing an answer to a user supplied natural language question based on stored information on a computer-readable medium comprising:

receiving a user supplied natural language question via a computer user interface in which the user supplied natural language question includes a question word;

generating an analyzed question comprised of syntactic and morphological categories derived from the user supplied natural language question;

determining which question pattern from a table of predetermined questions patterns corresponds to the analyzed question by matching the order and type of syntactic and morphological categories derived from the user supplied natural language question to the order and type of syntactic and morphological categories of the predetermined question patterns;

replacing the question word with at least one partially unspecified term that is conceptually related to the question word and the answer;

transforming the question pattern into an affirmative statement pattern that includes: (i) syntactic and morphological categories; and (ii) the at least one partially unspecified term;

generating a partially unspecified query based on the affirmative statement pattern, the partially unspecified query containing the at least one partially unspecified term; and

determining at least one answer to the user supplied natural language question by matching the partially unspecified query to the stored information wherein the at least one partially unspecified term is further matched to a specific term in the stored information.

48.   (New) The method of claim 47, wherein the transforming a question pattern into an affirmative statement pattern uses syntactic frames.

49.   (New) The method of claim 47, wherein the stored information comprises a set of documents and an index identifying which documents within the set of documents contain terms or groups of terms answering the partially unspecified query.

50.   (New) The method of claim 49 further comprising collecting the answer from matching the partially unspecified query across a plurality of documents in the stored information.

51.   (New) The method of claim 47 further comprising ranking the at least one answer according to their frequency of matching.

52.   (New) The method of claim 47, wherein transforming the question pattern into an affirmative statement pattern further comprises replacing a generic syntactic or

morphological category with one or more corresponding elements from the user supplied natural language question.

53.   (New) The method of claim 47, wherein the affirmative statement pattern is transformed into more than one partially unspecified query in accordance with a mapping of the question word to more than one conceptually related partially unspecified terms.

54.   (New) A computer readable medium storing a computer program product for providing an answer to a user supplied natural language question based on stored information comprising:

computer program code for receiving a user supplied natural language question via a computer user interface in which the user supplied natural language question includes a question word;

computer program code for generating an analyzed question comprised of syntactic and morphological categories derived from the user supplied natural language question;

computer program code for determining which question pattern from a table of predetermined questions patterns corresponds to the analyzed question by matching the order and type of syntactic and morphological categories derived from the user supplied natural language question to the order and type of syntactic and morphological categories of the predetermined question patterns;

computer program code for replacing the question word with at least one

partially unspecified term that is conceptually related to the question word and the

answer;

computer program code for transforming the question pattern into an affirmative

statement pattern that includes: (i) syntactic and morphological categories; and (ii) the

at least one partially unspecified term;

computer program code for generating a partially unspecified query based on

the affirmative statement pattern, the partially unspecified query containing the at least

one partially unspecified term; and

computer program code for determining at least one answer to the user supplied

natural language question by matching the partially unspecified query to the stored

information wherein the at least one partially unspecified term is further matched to a

specific term in the stored information.

55.   (New) The computer readable medium storing a computer program product of

claim 54, wherein the computer program code for transforming a question pattern into

an affirmative statement pattern uses syntactic frames.

56.   (New) The computer readable medium storing a computer program product of

claim 54, wherein the stored information comprises a set of documents and an index

identifying which documents within the set of documents contain terms or groups of

terms answering the partially unspecified query.

57.   (New) The computer readable medium storing a computer program product of claim 56 further comprising computer program code for collecting the answer from matching the partially unspecified query across a plurality of documents in the stored information.

58.   (New) The computer readable medium storing a computer program product of claim 54 further comprising computer program code for ranking the at least one answer according to their frequency of matching.

59.   (New) The computer readable medium storing a computer program product of claim 54, wherein the computer program code for transforming the question pattern into an affirmative statement pattern further comprises computer program code for replacing a generic syntactic or morphological category with one or more corresponding elements from the user supplied natural language question.

60.   (New) The computer readable medium storing a computer program product of claim 54, wherein the affirmative statement pattern is transformed into more than one partially unspecified query in accordance with a mapping of the question word to more than one conceptually related partially unspecified terms.